Yale Journal of Music & Religion

Volume 3 | Number 2 Article 1

2017

# The Acoustics of Justice: Music and Myth in Afro-Brazilian Congado

Genevieve E. Dempsey
*Mamolen Fellow at the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University*

# The Acoustics of Justice: Music and Myth in Afro-Brazilian Congado

**Cover Page Footnote**
I am thankful to the Ruth Landes Memorial Research Fund of the Reed Foundation for providing the generous support of time and resources to write this article. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the American Association of University Women (2015-2016) and the Fulbright IIE Program (2014-2015) for facilitating the ethnographic and archival research and writing for my dissertation. The idea for this paper emerged during my Ph.D. at the University of Chicago and I wish to thank my dissertation committee, Travis A. Jackson, Philip V. Bohlman, Melvin L. Butler, and Kaley R. Mason, for the engaging environment that they fostered. I extend very special thanks to Susan Youens at the University of Notre Dame for her insights and suggestions on this project as well as enthusiastic support throughout the years. My sincere gratitude also goes to the anonymous readers and editors at the Yale Journal of Music and Religion for helping to shape the manuscript's ideas. I am grateful to Philip V. Bohlman for contributing valuable input to this article and, above all, for providing unwavering mentorship and inspiration. Finally, a very special thank you to the wise, patient, and welcoming Congadeiros without whom this project would not have been possible.

# The Acoustics of Justice

## Music and Myth in Afro-Brazilian *Congado*

Genevieve E. V. Dempsey

> We say that the Congado drum represents the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary. Hence, the drum is sacred. It must be played only to praise Our Lady of the Rosary and the black saints.
> —Kedison Geraldo (2014)

Reflecting on the sacred nature of the drum, Kedison Geraldo, a musician in the Afro-Brazilian, popular Catholic community of *Congado*, concluded a myth of origin about its rituals. His observations constituted part of a longer myth of the numinous apparition of Our Lady of the Rosary in the sea to the enslaved ancestors of *Congadeiros*, the African and Afro-descendant peoples who have carried out vernacular ceremonies in veneration of Our Lady, their principal icon of devotion, and black saints, such as St. Benedict and St. Iphigenia, since the seventeenth century in Brazil.[1] In the story, the beauty of the slaves' handcrafted instruments and melodious songs coaxed Our Lady from the ocean. Their musicality, combined with religiosity and humility, encouraged her to sit atop the Congado drum rather than reside in the church of the white devotees, who also beckoned from the seashore. The lore does not merely illustrate a celestial situation; it also conveys an earthly quest for justice and social harmony. By alighting on the drum of the slaves, Our Lady of the Rosary inspired black people to envision and consolidate a different kind of personhood and order—grounded in fairness, equality, and compassion.

[1] Urbain Souchu Rennefort, *Histoire des Indes Orientales* (Paris: Arnoul Seneuze, 1688), 204–05.

Predominantly composed of Afro-Brazilians, Congadeiros typically come from marginalized communities in Minas Gerais, a state in the north of Brazil's southeast. There are thousands of Congadeiros, however, all over urban and rural Brazil, notably in the states of São Paulo and Goiás. Many work as farmers, housekeepers, instrument makers, security guards, and hairdressers, among other trades. Against a backdrop of racial struggle, Congadeiros use myth to build an economy of survival, at once social, religious, and aesthetic. Although myth is not the only means to express their ultimate concerns, I want to claim that it functions as a central vehicle for articulating their epistemologies, particularly those surrounding race, that condition their actions in everyday life. To address further the question of suffering and survival in Congado communities, it is helpful to review Geraldo's myth in its entirety. Invoking an intriguing scene, Geraldo related:

> There was a ship on the sea. An image of Our Lady of the Rosary fell from the ship. The white people tried to retrieve the image. The black people asked if they could also retrieve the image, but the white people wouldn't let them. The white people constructed a chapel for her and tried to take her to it. But, the following day, the image appeared in the water again. She would not let the white people take her image. Thus, the black people had the opportunity to bring the image to the slave quarters [*senzala*].
>
> First came *Congo*, which represented the youngest black people who were anxious for emancipation. They jumped, they danced. Then came the *Caboclo* who was dressed as indigenous people and represented the land.

> Then the *Vilão*, *Catopê*, and *Marujada*—who were slaves that were arriving in the port. Also, the *Candombe*, the group that has three sacred drums which are played in closed spaces. And finally came *Moçambique*. Moçambique represents the group of the oldest black people that were tired and still chained.
>
> Because they didn't have an altar, Our Lady of the Rosary sat upon a drum. Thus, we say that the Congado drum represents the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary. Hence, the drum is sacred. It must be played only to praise Our Lady of the Rosary and the black saints.[2]

This myth provides traction on the kind of signifiers most precious to Congadeiros. It shows how Congadeiros felt empowered during slavery by Our Lady of the Rosary's divine presence, and emboldened by the bestowal of her blessings and spiritual care. Indeed, practitioners imbue lore with common themes such as immanence, black pride, and perseverance in order to remember their ancestors and envisage racial equality. It is because of this function as a tool of remembrance and grace that their stories transform into directives for their actions as well as visions of how the world might look in racial harmony.

On matters of providence and survival in Congado communities, myth is not the only witness; music also speaks to these profound levels of human meaning. A paradigmatic example of how music illustrates matters that concern Congadeiros derives from the commonly performed "Lamento Negro" (Black Person's Lament), a song sung before the beginning of a Congo Mass (*Missa Conga*). The Congo Mass retains the major elements of Catholic liturgy, but Congadeiros add their own vernacular musical and ceremonial aspects to it. Before Mass, Congadeiros gather at the closed doors of the main church and sing the following song to the accompaniment of drums:

> I am going to tell you a story, I ask that you pay attention,
> It is an ancient story from the time of slavery.
> It was on the thirteenth day in May when the group worked.
> Look, the black man was captive and the princess liberated him.
> Look, the black man was captive and now he turned into a respected man.
> It was in the time of slavery that the white man was in charge.
> When the white man went to Mass, it was the black man who brought him.
> The white man entered into the church and the black man stayed here outside.
> And if the black man protested, he would be hit with the whip.
> The black man prayed when he arrived in the slave quarter [*senzala*].
> He prayed, and to *Zambi* [God/Central African divinity], he surrendered himself.
> What suffering, what suffering, Jesus Christ is in the sky, protecting the souls of these suffering black people.

After worshipers conclude the "Lamento Negro," they typically intone a final song that calls for the church doors to be opened. They sing:

> Santo padre,
> Abre a porta,
> Nego véio quer entrar
> Prá assistir à santa Missa
> Que vosmicê vai celebrá.
>
> Blessed father,
> Open the door,
> The black person has come and wants to enter
> To see the blessed Mass
> That you are going to celebrate.

[2] Kedison Geraldo, interview by author (Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 2014).

Upon the song's conclusion, the church doors part and the group moves over the threshold, playing and singing boisterously to announce the beginning of the Congo Mass.

The "Lamento Negro" and Geraldo's myth yield productive insights about Congado struggles for the exercise of rites and rights. Embedded within the oral and aural texts are various dilemmas that practitioners confront: how do they think that their ancestors asserted control over their bodies and minds in the context of slavery, and how can black agency and autonomy be mobilized today despite pervasive racial discrimination and impoverishment? In representing autonomy and justice *in* myth and song, practitioners come to instantiate social and intellectual mobility *outside* of these expressive spheres. Indeed, my broader interest in comparing music and myth is to make patent how these entities signify the possibility of *being* otherwise,[3] of being different from what dominators dictated in the past and from what the nation-state continues to demand and stipulate of minority groups today.

Employing methods from ethnomusicology, anthropology, and history, and using participant observation, interviews, archives, and literature, I compare sound and lore because they deal with the cosmic, and thus in turn help practitioners to intervene in the lived-in world. Despite being different in form and figuration, music and myth express similar, fundamental stories about the suffering of Congadeiros' ancestors as well as their struggles for racial equality in the present. What myth and music mediate are the lives of human beings in crisis, who nevertheless persist; and everything about their aural and oral expressive forms reflects this will to survive.

Some may suggest, however, that music and myth are too distinct for comparison. I claim here, however, that they are eminently translatable modalities because each entity references the other within its text and subtext. Myth gives primacy to scenes of music making, and their musical performances provide purchase on the ideas of collectivity, racial pride, and transcendence embedded in myth. It is precisely the endeavor to see sameness in difference that best captures the ways in which myth and music converge to illuminate the larger picture of common humanity and humaneness that pervade the Congadeiros' everyday lives. As embodied performances, music and myth are both generative and reflective of the conditions of possibility necessary for Congadeiros to self-fashion themselves according to their own imaginary. Indeed, by destabilizing the non-comparative approach, this endeavor opens up intriguing ways to understand how ideas such as race and social mobility constitute the human condition writ large.

Similar to other nationalisms across Latin America that emphasize cultural mixing and racial miscegenation (*mestizaje*) as the essential centerpiece of national identity, Brazilian nationalism has cultivated an equally totalizing discourse of *mestiçagem* (miscegenation). While miscegenation represents an attempt to capture the diverse inhabitants of Brazil, it also forecloses opportunities for certain communities to occupy unique racial and semiotic categories of signification. At stake is not that miscegenation shuns a black legacy in toto but that by drawing it into a discourse of mixing, it drains it of distinctiveness.

Thus when Congadeiros invoke blackness as a hallmark of their identity, it is often inter-

[3] Christine Arce, *Méxicos Nobodies: The Cultural Legacy of the Soldadera and Afro-Mexican Women* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017), 21.

preted as contradicting the national ideology of miscegenation and discourses of racial democracy (nonracism). In this way, Congado claims to blackness are as much about indexing a black phenotype as about identifying with black culture so as to deflect the Congadeiros' invisibility and inaudibility. Moreover, the dialogue between black racial identity and the social conditions of its production is rendered clear through a comparison of sound and lore. Indeed, the politics of the aesthetic realm can be read from the perspective of both myth and music because together they outline the essential elements of the Congado community's knowledge. In the broadest sense, more than merely witnesses to the telling of "history," music and myth become media for remembering a racial past, making its present, and envisaging its future.

While Congadeiros represent a small percentage of Brazilian citizens, their negotiations of the conjuncture of race and rights through mythic and musical discourses illuminate contemporary debates that materialize in Afro–Latin American identity politics. Indeed, these "regional" expressions become simultaneously national and transnational in scope because the representation of blackness as constitutive of Congado is just one case in point among many similarly related phenomena. To situate Congado music and myth within broader geographic and temporal contexts is to reveal the decided interrelationality between different relata in a network of diverging and converging processes of exchange across the Americas. Thus, Congado as a case study allows for greater theoretical and ethnographic nuance of the complex scenarios of contact and becoming within Latin America and the Afro-Atlantic world.

## The Inner Workings of Congado

The term *Congado* (also known interchangeably as *Congada* and *Congos*) encompasses multivalent meanings, cutting across diverse periods of time and place. It can refer to the community as a whole, the songs, dances, parades, and rituals themselves, as well as the groups of around 15 to 150 musicians who are accompanied by royal entourages.[4] The royal court of kings and queens that parade behind the musical groups are intended to personify the celestial kingdom of Our Lady of the Rosary; in this sense Congado evokes the European Catholic tradition of parading with sacred objects in pilgrimages and processions.[5]

The royal parades also concomitantly invoke African-derived king and queen coronations, known variously as *festa dos negros* (festival of the black people), *festa de reis Congos* (festival of the Congo kings and queens), *coroação de rei negro* (coronation of the black king), *coroações de reis de nação* (coronations of the kings of the nations), and *reinados negros brasileiros* (black Brazilian kingdoms). African and Afro-descendant slaves and free(d) peoples cultivated these festivities of sacred and secular outlook throughout colonial and postcolonial Brazil, culminating in what we know today as Congado.

The practitioners can engage in seven different kinds of Congado groups—*Congo*, *Moçambique*, *Candombe, Catopê*, *Vilão*, *Marujo*, and *Caboclo*—although the existence of certain groups is contingent on the particular locale.

[4] There are several interchangeable ways of describing song among Congadeiros such as: *cântico* (chant), *música* (denoting music in general as well as a single song), *cantiga* (short song), *cantoria* (singing), and *canto* (song in general as well as an individual song).

[5] Carlos Brandão, *A clara cor da noite escura: Escritos e imagens de mulheres e homens negros de Goiás e Minas Gerais* (Goiânia, Goiás: Editora da Universidade Católica de Goiás, 2009), 117.

The ensembles are distinct from one another, having different repertoires and ritual responsibilities, yet they also perform together in *festas*, multiday festivals comprised of processions, coronations, banner raising and lowering rituals, visitations to homes, feasts, Masses, ceremonies for the payment of promises, and the like (see Fig. 1).[6]

Approximately each weekend from the end of Lent to November, groups travel to festivals hosted by fellow Congadeiros in neighboring cities or invite these groups to animate their own rituals (see Fig. 2). When the Congado religious cycle concludes, participants commence other vernacular Catholic traditions such as *folias de reis*, rituals associated with the Magi.[7] In the broadest sense, their rituals both align with and stand apart from Roman Catholic practices in that they perform ceremonies such as Mass and novenas, while also carrying out practices such as dances, visitations, coronations, songs, parades, and dawn ceremonies that are often critiqued by Roman Catholic authorities as profane. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church sometimes embraces and sometimes denounces Congadeiros in accordance with changes in their socioreligious values and subjective perspectives.

A case in point of how Congado practices signify both within and outside of official practices is the 1940 record of Congado in the book of inventory (*livro de Tombo*) of the Parish of Our Lady of Help of Ilhabela, an archipelago and city situated four miles off the coast of the state of São Paulo, Brazil. One entry reads: "The Festival of St. Benedict took place. One can appreciate how interesting the tradition is and how worthy the Congadas are of conservation."[8]

This contrasts with the 1945 entry, which condemns the Congadeiros for creating a pagan festival intertwined with religious overtones. The priests prohibited the entrance of the Congada with their characteristic garb to the grounds of the church. Henceforth, "in June the traditional Festival of St. Benedict was celebrated with a triduum preached in preparation for the Mass. There was no pagan Congada."[9] Within the span of five years, Congados went from being esteemed in the popular imaginary to being rebuked for paganism.

The Roman Catholic Church's shift from acclaim to damnation of Congado groups still mediates, in my understanding, the complex relationship between the two communities today.

On one hand, there is a deep imbrication between Congado groups and the church, as evidenced by various collaborations; for example, when priests preside over the Congo Mass. At the same time, the uniqueness of Congado ritual shows how they endeavor to remain autonomous actors. What is interesting, thus, is to chart how they negotiate this insider/outsider positionality within the church and state through expressive and affective modalities.

[6] Fig. 1 depicts the Black Community of the Arturos as they parade throughout their community during the payment of promises ceremony of the Festival of Our Lady of the Rosary. Notice how the woman cloaked in a blue cape walks on her knees around the chapel in request of or thanks for the intercession of Our Lady of the Rosary.

[7] Glaura Lucas, *Os sons do rosário: O Congado mineiro dos Arturos e Jatobá* (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2002).

[8] Livro de Tombo da Paróquia Nossa Senhora d'Ajuda de Ilhabela, 1940, 44.

[9] Livro de Tombo da Paróquia Nossa Senhora d'Ajuda de Ilhabela, 1945, 68.

Fig. 1: Congado payment of promise ceremony from the Black Community of the Arturos, Festival of Our Lady of the Rosary, Contagem, Minas Gerais, 2014. Photo by author.

Fig. 2: Gabriel da Silva Baeta Nedes drums and sings in the annual festival for the abolition of slavery on May 13, 2014, Concórdia, Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Photo by author.

Congadeiros understand their instruments to be inherently sacred, as well as vehicles for placing themselves within history. For example, practitioners use percussion instruments called *gungas/campanhas* (ankle shakers) and *patangomes* (hand shakers), which are crafted from empty food cans and hubcaps, respectively, and sealed with black seeds inside. Gungas are not merely rhythmic support; they echo the sounds of the heavy chains and bells worn by their ancestors. The patangomes represent the tools with which slaves panned for gold in the mines of eighteenth-century Minas Gerais. Thus, gungas and patangomes evoke the co-presence of their ancestors in material form.

Besides the gungas and patangomes, musicians in Moçambique also play *tambores/caixas*, or double-headed cylindrical skin drums. Likewise, in Congo, musicians perform on slightly smaller double-headed cylindrical skin drums, as well as on the *tamboril/tamborim* (small frame drum), *tarol* (snare drum), *pandeiro* (tambourine), *meia lua* (half-moon shaker), *reco-reco/canzalo* (metal/wood/bamboo scraper), *caxixis* (bamboo shakers of various sizes), *sanfona* (accordion), *acordeon de oito baixos* (button accordion), *viola* (five–double-coursed guitar), *bandolim* (four–double-coursed guitar), banjo, marimba, and *violão* (guitar).

In my reading, implicit, if not explicit, in these ways of making instruments is the imperative to foreground the disruptive knowledge of Congado autonomy and agency through the materiality of the object and the aurality of its sound. From fiery drumming to rapturous antiphonal homophony, Congadeiros exercise creative license through sacred song to redress oppression, counteract social exclusion, and, to the extent that is possible, negotiate belonging within the Brazilian nation and global ecumene on their own terms.

While the designation *Congado* typically finds currency throughout Minas Gerais, this is not always the case. Practitioners from the city of Montes Claros, for instance, do not identify with the term *Congado*, nor do they have a comprehensive appellation that encapsulates the three groups in the region: Catopê, Marujada, and Caboclo. Practitioners from the wider Belo Horizonte region, in contrast, often refer to Moçambique, Candombe, and Congo together as Congado. Congado thus is a term that both scholars and practitioners use, but its applicability is context-contingent. Still, other practitioners deem this term to be problematic, preferring instead the designation *Reinado*. Reinado is intended to invoke the totality of the royal court and musical groups by gesturing to both the European-inspired tradition of parading with ecclesiastical retinues and the African-inspired ceremony of imperial coronations. These hybrid rituals of European and African origin undergirded and continue to help black people to build their own structures of social relations, remember Africa, demonstrate status and prestige, and define their relation to local socioreligious society.[10] Thus, traversing centuries and diverse contexts, Congadeiros have called their performances by various names to imbue them with particular cultural values and subjectivities, but above all to give them autonomous purchase on their traditions. Indeed, the various ways in which practitioners refer to their traditions speak to how Congado is less a single entity than a constellation of cosmovisions and rituals mobilized to counter the injustice of racial invisibility in Brazilian society.

[10] Elizabeth W. Kiddy, *Blacks of the Rosary: Memory and History in Minas Gerais, Brazil* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).

**Genesis and Transcendence**

Congadeiros typically deploy myth to narrate the genesis of their community—to explain how it originated and why they organize their sacred rituals in particular ways. In *Myth and Reality*, Mircea Eliade writes,

> Myth, then, is always an account of a "creation"; it relates how something was produced, began to *be*. . . . In short, myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the "supernatural") into the World. It is this sudden breakthrough of the sacred that really *establishes* the World and makes it what it is today.[11]

Eliade in his observations limns out a similar issue in Congado wherein practitioners blur the boundaries between being, becoming, and *being-in-the-world*. In other words, the primordial nature of Congado's beginning—how it began to *be*—cannot be unbound from how practitioners understand their ontological state of *being-in-the-world*. From this viewpoint, Congadeiros use mythological metaphors not only to explain how their musico-religious universe commenced, but also their ultimate vision of it.

It is precisely the metaphors of survival, uniqueness, and favor embedded in myths of origin that mediate their most fundamental subjectivities.[12] In the broadest sense, then, the myth of origin creates the conditions of possibility necessary for beginnings, as well as those necessary for the development of a habitus of black pride. In this way, myth becomes the ne plus ultra not only of the past but also of the present and future.

Speaking to this issue, ethnomusicologist Glaura Lucas outlines myth as a medium of historical remembrance. By doing so, she seems to imply concomitantly that the past is nowhere more applicable than in the making of an alternative, emergent present.

> Congadeiros search for the causes in the mythic text, the beginning, the base that forms and structures the festival, the nature of their faith, the feeling and attitude toward sacralized objects, the music, song, and dance. The legend maintains alive the memory and history of slavery, the suffering of their ancestors in captivity and the maneuvers of resistance.[13]

Through Lucas's observations, we can appreciate how Our Lady's apparition is not merely about the genesis of a musico-religious tradition; the myth also adumbrates the ongoing processes of remembrance and resistance of a black Catholic community. Indeed, embodying foundational epistemes of the community, the myth of origin both narrates a story of origin and structures worshipers' broader ideologies about the nature of their socioreligious structures and contexts.

Despite not being able to confirm the historical "truth" of Our Lady's apparition, the myth is not a falsehood to be juxtaposed against historicity. Even if we had empirical proof of the apparition, it would tell us little more about who Congadeiros were and about how Congadeiros self-fashion themselves. Ultimately, myth enacts a "'true history,' because it always deals with *realities*."[14] Understood by Congadeiros as history, this reality that myth so readily captures is grounded in questions of racial identification. Congadeiros derive much pride from the conviction that black musicians, not white people, drew Our Lady from the waters with sweet singing, ardent drumming,

[11] Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality,* ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 6.

[12] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 10.

[13] Lucas, *Os sons do rosário*, 60.

[14] Eliade, *Myth and Reality,* 6.

and unwavering devotion.[15] In this way, Congado myths of origin make race a crucial object of private and public attention.

In the following passage, Suzel Ana Reily highlights the nexus between phenotype and pride, showing how myth paradigmatically captures their most fundamental beliefs about racial identity:

> An image of Our Lady of the Rosary is located in a remote place. A prestigious musical ensemble is summoned to escort her to a new church, but she either refuses to follow them or returns during the night to her initial location. Another rather less prestigious ensemble attempts to persuade her to stay in the new church, but again she refuses. Finally, the Congadas are allowed to see if they can get her to follow them, and they are successful. By agreeing to follow the black dancers, Our Lady legitimizes and blesses their performances.[16]

According to Reily, the myth sets in motion an inversion of the social order by connecting black bodies with achievement and divine favor. She begins by showing how the prestigious musical ensembles—that is, white groups—assumed that they were the chosen ones for Our Lady's divine presence. But then she concludes by revealing how Our Lady ultimately favored the black dancers.

By upending the traditional concept of racial privilege, Reily brings into sharp discursive focus how black people and their ability to perform efficacious work matter in changing the nature of social structures and environments. In other words, as the black worshipers engage in the embodied performance of musical and choreographic motion, they produce alternative meanings that destabilize the status quo and reconstruct in its place a new way to define themselves in worldly and cosmic realms.

In a similar gesture, folklorist Maria Agripina Neves reinforces the recurring motif of human suffering and saintly intervention in the myth of origin. As such, she underscores the reflexive relationship between Congado expression of devotion through euphonious music and Our Lady's protection of their sacred work through providence.

> The very emergence of Congado groups has to do with popular Catholicism. You must have heard of the myth of the creation of the groups. Moçambique, for example, was the group that pulled Our Lady of the Rosary from the waters. They brought her [from the water] and were the only ones who were able to convince her to stay on land. Our Lady didn't accept remaining among the white people because they were considered by the black people to be, well, bad. The white person punished them. Thus, Our Lady preferred to stay by the side of the black people—who are a humble people, a suffering people.[17]

Neves's observations leave no real doubt that Our Lady's decision to align herself with the black people led to emancipatory feelings among them; it confirmed black people's conviction of worth and challenged the normative thinking that white people were automatically preferred by Our Lady. Indeed, a main subtext of the myth was the denunciation of slavery through a disassociation of the linkage between black phenotypes and oppression. If black people were Our Lady's preferred ones as opposed to figures of enslavement, then how did this reversal upend the very rationale for enslaving blacks at the outset?

[15] Leda Maria Martins, *Afrografias da memória: O reinado do rosário no Jatobá* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1997), 56.

[16] Suzel Ana Reily, "Music, Minas, and the Golden Atlantic," *Cambridge History of World Music*, ed. Philip V. Bohlman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), online version (accessed Oct. 20, 2016), 223–52; 245.

[17] Maria Agripina Neves, interview by author (Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais, Brazil, 2014).

In this way, Neves's comments speak to disruption as the new privileged locus of action. By siding with the black people, Our Lady of the Rosary challenged the status quo and ushered in what Wendy Doniger calls the "fluxus quo"—a unique space in which to create epistemes of their own moral and ethical engineering.[18] Social anthropologist Taís Diniz Garone addresses a similar idea:

> The hierophany of Our Lady of the Rosary, which Congadeiros consider the principal foundation of their tradition, was marked by a series of extraordinary happenings: the earth trembled, the water churned—the occurrence resounded throughout the sea, land, and skies. Diverse were the retinues, earthly and heavenly, that tried to bring her to firm land, but she only accepted being rescued by the humblest people, enchanted by the music that emanated from their drums, with their faith and spiritual force.[19]

In Garone's analysis, the myth sacralizes humility, dignity, and faith, concepts that are both indexes and agents of black people's embodied performance. Crucial here is that the oppressed were able to achieve spiritual and social transformation through spiritual praxis and musical competence. Indeed, embedded in the myth and music are metaphors for sacred action that spur on the transcendence of social and racial oppression.

Elizabeth Kiddy echoes Garone's observations by shedding light on how the situation called not only for humility and skill on the part of black people but also for collective engagement. Thus, grit and competence combined with unity were generative of Congado economy of survival.

> The white authorities decided to let the blacks have a try at coaxing her out of the water. Various nations of blacks—first the Congo, then the Mozambique—went to the shore with their instruments to dance and sing, trying to lure her from the waves. Only when the "three oldest blacks" of the Candombe (the mythical ancestor of the Congado), with their three sacred drums, went to the shore and played did Our Lady begin to stir. Not until the Congo and the Mozambique joined the Candombe and all the African nations played, sang, and dance together, did Our Lady finally come out of the waves and sit on the largest drum.[20]

Kiddy advances the idea that the success of summoning Our Lady from the water hinged upon worshipers' joint venture. Indeed, insofar as they achieved redemption and salvation through the grace of Our Lady, it was mainly through their collective music making. Performed together, their song and drumming rendered visible their dedication to equality and mutuality. Community then became the sine qua non of immanence. The critical point here is that the collective musicking body was inseparable from the socioreligious transformation that they envisioned and ultimately enacted.

When thinking about the myths told so far, we should consider the multifold variations and voices within Congado, but we might also ponder the most evident element: myth as a unifying agent that assembles various complex and often contradictory metaphoric strands. From this viewpoint, myth not only ties diverse subject positions together, it also demonstrates striking discursive commonalities despite geographic difference and historical change. Indeed, Congadeiros are drawn together by the abiding presence of certain topoi—hardship, deliverance, perseverance—that inhere within

[18] Wendy Doniger, *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 107.

[19] Taís Diniz Garone, "Uma poética da mediação: História, mito e ritual no Congado Setelagoano—MG" (Master's thesis, Universidade de Brasília, 2008), 84–85.

[20] Elizabeth W. Kiddy, "Congados, Calunga, Candombe: Our Lady of the Rosary in Minas Gerais, Brazil," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 37 (2000): 47–61, at 49.

myths about musical genesis. I would submit that the unified imaginary contained in myth represents Congadeiros' efforts to use the aesthetic realm as a political platform. It is through the telling of their own reading of historical genesis via myth that the subaltern comes to unseat hegemonic ideas and instantiate in its place a unique regime of consciousness and engaged sociopolitical participation in society.

Similar to myth, the expressive modality of music also invokes politicized topoi. In an interview, Jorge Antônio dos Santos, a captain in the Moçambique group from the Black Community of the Arturos (*Comunidade Negra dos Arturos*), underlined how collective song manifested various sentiments that helped them navigate their lives and consolidate their vision of the world.[21]

> When we sing specific songs, what comes to our mind are various remembrances. Sometimes they are remembrances that we never even witnessed, such as the lives of our ancestors. We imagine how the lives of our enslaved people were in the beginning. The suffering of our people in terms of the difficulty of life. Our people were brought here to Brazil, here enslaved, and then after, they were liberated. But they didn't even know how to live, where to go, live from what or how. Thus, all this comes to our imagination. And the emotion, it takes over our being. And in this way, we have this feeling. This we transmit in the music. We have feelings of happiness that begin from liberation. We go about living, creating, looking for better life conditions, better positions in society. What we see that is of positive return, we celebrate. Congado is not just sadness. It is not just to remember bad things when remembering feelings. There are also moments of glory, of victory, of happiness. This also is transmitted in the music.[22]

Jorge Antônio dos Santos does not speak for all Congadeiros, yet his eloquent observations are illustrative of a common sentiment among believers that music evokes various sentiments—grief, elation, relief—that guide them in their self-fashioning. In the broadest sense, from myth to music, all these assemblages herald the creation of a habitus grounded in equality, fairness, and the pursuit of happiness. No doubt progress toward these goals is affected by the larger political context in which Congadeiros move, but regardless, all of these myths, observations, and songs (delineated below in musical transcriptions) represent expressions of empowerment that mobilize the machine of change. Indeed, reading myth and music in ensemble with each other sheds light on how these expressive media not only loom large as mechanisms for transformation; they also reinstate black agency as a focal point of cultural production.

## The Color of Geography

Another element crucial to our story about the myth of origin is that worshipers claim various geographic sites for the apparition of Our Lady of the Rosary. What might contradictory geographic discourses in myth say about how practitioners understand what they do? On one hand, to locate Congado's genesis in Brazil is to claim an unprecedented and unique musico-religious phenomenon. On the other, to locate the apparition of Our Lady in Africa bespeaks

[21] The Arturos community is a *quilombo*, or Brazilian hinterland community of people of African origin who descend from escaped slaves, or maroons. Today, the designation *Quilombo* also encompasses those settlements whose inhabitants assume an Afro-Brazilian identity and cultivate black traditions regardless of any historical ties to runaway slaves. In the case of the Black Community of the Arturos, all persons who live on the land must be descended from or married to people from the family of Artur Camilo Silvério and Carmelinda Maria da Silva.

[22] Jorge Antônio dos Santos, interview by author (Contagem, Minas Gerais, Brazil, 2014).

a desire to legitimize their rituals through processes of Africanization.

Suzel Ana Reily characterizes the site of apparition ambiguously as a "remote place." Kedison Geraldo notes that Our Lady appeared in the water; although he omits mentioning the locale, he implies Brazil through allusions to widespread slavery. Senior captain (*capitão-mor*) João Lopes, from the brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary of Jatobá, more explicitly intimates Brazil's slave quarters as the site of Congado's beginning:

> Because the black people, when they saw Our Lady of the Rosary, sang for her. The importance of the Reinado song is in the originality of the beginning. . . . Thus, the importance of the song on the day of the festival is found on the shores of the ocean. The captains who sing songs on the day of the festival, have their minds trained on Our Lady as well as on the first owners of the second kingdom here on earth, the black people who came to beat those drums. The first festivals of Our Lady of the Rosary occurred in the slave quarters because they couldn't enter the Church.[23]

Complicating this geographic designation are the observations of Cecília Preta:

> She appeared on the sand of the Angola river. There went the king, a brass ensemble, chorus of angels, but she didn't come; the priest went, she didn't come. The black people made a wooden platform [used to parade religious images] on which she could sit and she came. . . . They had a greater spiritual force that the white people. A force that was like magic, with the Candombe . . . the oldest one, most important one.[24]

Other devotees situate Our Lady's apparition at a different locale in Africa. João Manoel de Deus, known as Janjão, says, "I believe that many of them witnessed her arrival on the sand of the Jordan river."[25] Important for our story is that these variants of myth seem to imply different kinds of epistemes. According to João Lopes, Congado is fundamentally a New World tradition because it began in the slave quarters of Brazil, a place that drew together various African ethnicities. From this perspective, Congado is not about the assimilation of European or African traditions in toto, but rather about the conjoining of different traditions to generate a new entity altogether.

In contrast, Cecília Preta and Janjão aver that Our Lady appeared in Africa, making Congado a purely African tradition that was later transplanted to Brazil. It seems to me that an emphasis on the tradition's African-derived contours derives from the desire to counteract outsiders' claims that the Congadeiros merely adapt rituals that originated in Catholic lay confraternities, or *irmandades*, organized by the Portuguese crown and church in sixteenth-century Brazil. The very assertion that Our Lady appeared to Congadeiros in Africa allows them to forge an inextricable connection with Africa.

Their assurances of Congado's African origins, moreover, are coincident with their claims of descent from people of the Congo, a kingdom founded in the fourteenth century, according to oral history and archaeological evidence. Situated in west-central Africa south of the Congo River, the kingdom traversed the western part of today's Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Angola. Not only do practitioners claim ethnic heritage from this region, but many also continue to maintain aspects of Congo cosmology in Brazil. Nothing epitomizes Congo cosmology within Congado more than the idea that the world (*nza*) floats

[23] João Lopes interviewed by Glaura Lucas, 2002.

[24] Cecília Preta interviewed by Maria Ambrósio, 1998.

[25] João Manoel de Deus interviewed by Maria Ambrósio, 1998.

in the *kalûnga* (the endless water within the cosmic space). Kimbwandende Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau explains, furthermore, how the

> Kalûnga became also the idea of immensity [*sènsele/wayawa*], that one cannot measure; an exit and entrance, source and origin of life, potentialities [*n'kîngunzâmbi*], the principle of god-of-change, the force that continually generates. Because kalûnga was the complete life, everything in touch with the earth shared that life, and became life after itself. That life appeared on the earth under all kinds of sizes and forms: plants, insects, animals, rocks, human beings, etc.[26]

In its capacity to conjure up images of the sea, kalûnga bears witness to and becomes a synecdoche for life in Congo cosmology. Images of the sea, moreover, illustrate a pan-African cosmological system that conceptualizes water as the bridge that links the living to the dead.[27]

Furthermore, water has historically symbolized the oceanic pathways across which the Congadeiros' ancestors were transported to bondage. Prima facie, the Atlantic crossing was commensurate with the Middle Passage and thus invoked fear in Congadeiros' ancestors. Yet it no doubt also engendered feelings of hope for enslaved peoples because the same currents that forcibly brought them to the New World could also return them home to Africa.[28] Hence, as Thomas Desch-Obi says, "People brought to the Americas from the region of Angola understood passage across the Atlantic kalûnga to be both a transformative process and a linking of two fundamentally connected worlds."[29] With these thoughts in mind, we can appreciate how the meanings that the metaphor of water charts in myth come to mediate the kinds of cosmologies and subject formations that obtain in black Catholicism and black Brazilian history more generally.

By the same token, the myth's metaphor of water is also deeply imbricated in the theological system of European Catholicism. For example, in Christian semiotics, even before the European medieval period, Our Lady's associative metaphor was the sea. And during the medieval period, apparition myths that emblematically enacted a linkage between Our Lady and the sea only increased.[30] In the broadest sense, then, the belief that Our Lady appeared to Congadeiros in the context of the sea is a powerful metaphor that registers at various levels of significance and evinces a willingness by worshipers to engage in transnational processes of mixing—cultural, historical, and religious. As such, the myth allegorizes syncretism through its deployment of symbols that crisscross interreligious boundaries. Indeed, descriptions of water evoke a rhizomatic history of cultural, theological, and racial descent in the sense that symbols of water illustrate Congadeiros' ancestral African homeland, their assimilation into European-derived Catholicism, and their ongoing cultivation of Congo cosmology in the New World.

Although Congado communities are typically comprised of peoples of African descent who have endured race-based exclusion throughout the centuries, they are not

[26] Kimbwandende Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau, *Tying the Spiritual Knot: African Cosmology of the Bântu-Kôngo: Principles of Life and Living* (New York: Athelia Henrietta Press, 2001 [1980]), 20–21.

[27] Thomas J. Desch-Obi, *Fighting for Honor: The History of African Martial Art Traditions in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008); Kiddy, "Congados, Calunga, Candombe," 49; Bunseki Fu-Kiau, *Tying the Spiritual Knot*.

[28] Desch-Obi, *Fighting for Honor*, 4.

[29] Ibid., 199.

[30] Stafford Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531–1979* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995).

exclusively Afro-Brazilian. They welcome people of all skin colors. Nonetheless, practitioners and nonparticipants alike continue to describe it as a "ritual of black people" for the political consciousness that it invokes. Congadeiros anchor their identity in blackness because the discourses link them to an ancestral past and socialize them into present-day struggles against racism.

What is more, affirmations of racial prejudice or adherence to a black identity in a nation that heralds itself as a country grounded in miscegenation (mestiçagem) and thus a "racial democracy" are typically seen by citizens as "un-Brazilian."[31] Miscegenation was a theory championed by Brazilian elites, notably by sociologist and anthropologist Gilberto Freyre in the early twentieth century, to convey racial mixture as an auspicious aspect of *brasilidade* (Brazilianness).[32] Strikingly, the national rhetoric of miscegenation was an emergent reaction to European race theorists in the 1910s and 1920s who viewed racial imbrication as degenerate.[33] While miscegenation connoted a racial mixture among indigenous, African, and European peoples, proponents did not necessarily perceive the three as equally valuable. Often the genealogical contributions of Africans and indigenous peoples were recognized, but largely overshadowed by the accolades given to the Portuguese for their "superior qualities."[34] Hence, Congado adherence to a black identity, one unmoored from an optimistic view of miscegenation and thus attached to the core of Brazil's national identity, calls into question their allegiance to Brazil as their ultimate form of identification. I contend that certain topoi within myth signal a desire by Congadeiros to denaturalize ideologies of racial mixing immanent in official discourses of Brazilianness and to naturalize it with perspectives that speak to their unique semiotic regime of blackness.

In the broadest sense, whether a particular geographic designation intimates a New World phenomenon or an African-derived one, almost all myths foreground black phenotype, musical competence, and devotion as the mobilizers of saintly intervention. What is clear is that the historical "facts" of the myth will forever remain ciphers, but the common metaphors that give continuity and purpose to its believers will nonetheless persist. At the conjunction between expressive culture and politics, Congadeiros work to imbue the myth with a kind of performative force that encourages struggles against racism. Myth reveals worshipers' attempts to valorize their Afro-Brazilianness by asserting themselves musically and racially as empowered human beings. In turn, empowered action becomes the strategic engine of redemption and renewal.

## The Sound of Metaphor

Congadeiros' worldviews manifest themselves in myth, but they also inhabit the performative realm of music in all its forms and figurations. As complementary voices in Congadeiros' system of orality, myth and music represent the languages of physiological and metaphorical

[31] Elisa Larkin Nascimento, *The Sorcery of Color: Identity, Race, and Gender in Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007); Livio Sansone, *Blackness without Ethnicity: Constructing Race in Brazil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Donna Goldstein, *Laughter Out of Place: Race, Class, Violence, and Sexuality in a Rio Shantytown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Robin E. Sheriff, "The Theft of Carnaval: National Spectacle and Racial Politics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil," *Cultural Anthropology* 14 (1999): 3–28.

[32] Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: Casa-grande & Senzala: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization,* trans. Samuel Putnam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986 [1933]).

[33] Barbara Weinstein, *The Color of Modernity: São Paulo and the Making of Race and Nation in Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 54.

[34] Ibid., 56.

gesture. Just as the myth references music in its narrative, music references the myth in its sonic contours by recreating the tropes of unity, immanence, and black pride so deeply ingrained in the myth. What music and myth share, then, are the ever-consistent vectors of common human concerns. They are the semiotic regimes, in other words, that absorb and refract worshipers' most fundamental life experiences. Strikingly, these critical experiences, as invoked by myth and music, tend to revolve around a dyad of redemption and black pride.

Nowhere are the ideas embedded in myths of origin reproduced more clearly than in the music of Candombe, known as the father of Congado. Congadeiros typically consider Candombe to be their ultimate earthly protector, making the group and its drums the most consecrated of all ensembles. During Candombe ceremonies, practitioners carry out rituals in honor of their sacred drums and ancestors.

This group does not parade in the processions or in any public rituals, but rather is dedicated to internal, private ceremonies. Even Congado communities who do not specifically have a Candombe group possess Candombe drums and play them during a designated time and place at Congado festivals. Captains as well as participants play three drums, or candombes (*Santana*—the biggest drum, *Santaninha*—the middle one, and *Jeremia* or *Chama*—the smallest one), *guaiás* (also known as *chocalhos de cesto*—basket-type rattles), and the *puíta* or *cuíca* (friction drum). The players play the drums with their hands, either standing or sitting. Relevant too is the fact that there is only one interlocking rhythmic pattern. During the ritual, the ancestors descend from the astral plane to commune with their friends and families. Remembering through sacred music solidifies Congadeiros' ties to their African and New World ancestors and vivifies the temporal intersection between the past and the present. Núbia Pereira de Magalhães Gomes and Edimilson de Almeida Pereira address this very issue when they write that "the drums of Candombe call the ancestors and function as intermediary bodies in the interplay between the living and the dead—although visible incorporation does not occur."[35]

The following transcription (see Ex. 1) derives from a ceremony in which one Candombe ensemble from the community of Quilombo do Mato do Tição, or Matição, from Jaboticatubas, Minas Gerais gifted a set of Candombe drums to the groups Moçambique and Congo of May 13 of Our Lady of the Rosary (Moçambique e Congo de Treze de Maio de Nossa Senhora do Rosário) during a festival in the neighborhood of Concórdia, Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais. The 2014 festival was one instantiation of an annual commemoration for the abolition of slavery that occurred initially in Brazil on May 13, 1888 (see Fig. 3).

The rhythmic transcription of Candombe is offered as an exemplum of the unified composite rhythm that the individual lines coalesce to form. Although the rhythm appears deceptively straightforward, its actual working is anything but simple. Indeed, the musical transcription aims to persuade readers that they might interpret the interlocking rhythms as an "interactive rhythmic feel" rather than as separate lines playing simultaneously.[36] Notice, for example, how the distinct periodicities of the two drumming patterns interlock to create

[35] Núbia Pereira de Magalhães Gomes and Edimilson de Almeida Pereira, *Negras raízes mineiras: Os Arturos* (Juiz de Fora: Ministério da Cultura/EDUFJF, 1988), 218.

[36] Shannon Dudley, "Judging by the Beat: Calypso vs. Soca," *Ethnomusicology* 40 (1996): 269–98.

a hemiola. This means that the net result of the drumming has pulses that fall on each eighth note in a steady stream of beats. In many respects, the hemiola creates a sense of embodied entrainment in the practitioner and listener. The patterns are in a triple meter and the drumming pattern of the first Candombe drum (Santana) also contains three beats, which means that it takes one measure for the rhythmic cell to repeat. In contrast, the second Candombe drum (Santaninha) is also in a triple meter, but its pattern has two beats, indicating that it takes two bars to complete the full pattern. The third Candombe drum (Jeremia/ Chama) plays the same rhythmic pattern as Santaninha.

While the drums all play in a triple meter, the different periodicities of the drumming patterns create a hemiola. The listener, in turn, perceives the hemiola as a steady stream of pulses and thus syncs with the music somatically. The interlocking rhythmic parts thus combine to bring about a composite, interactive rhythmic sensation of steady eighth notes.

Shannon Dudley has demonstrated how critical it is to attend to the "rhythmic feel" more than to the "beat" because "many rhythms can combine to produce a distinctive musical sensation."[37] He suggests that what is important in measuring music is "the consistent musical logic and composite aesthetic effect of many parts which interact together rhythmically."[38] In that spirit, the musical transcription attempts to make legible not only the independence of the rhythmic parts, but also how their imbrication brings the parts in dialogue with each other, culminating in a rhythmic groove that exceeds the sum of its parts.

Another idea to consider when focusing on Candombe's composite rhythmic feel is the *quality* of such a metric pattern. Candombe's overarching rhythmic groove derives not only from the interlocking parts, but also from the timbres of the drums. The three drums are pitched similarly, which means that the cumulative timbre borders on the monochromatic, or what I call monosonic. Indeed, it is precisely the timbral similarity of the drums that changes how listeners hear—how they segment the auditory stream into units. When the sounds of the similarly pitched drums combine with the accents produced by the interlocking rhythms, the listener perceives the hemiola at a completely different level—as a steady stream of eighth notes.

Equally indispensable to considering the timbres of drums when measuring rhythmic feel is rhythmic entry. I suggest that whatever conclusion one might draw from the interlocking percussive parts, what matters the most is not where the pattern starts, but the listener's relationship to the pattern. In other words, there are multiple points of entry into the rhythmic groove. For example, the guaiá player performs three different rhythmic patterns throughout the two-minute song. At three different points, he starts and stops, introducing a new rhythmic variety. Each time that he changes the rhythmic cell, he does not alter the musical flow of the song. Thus, implicit in these songs is the imperative for Candombe musicians to create a sense of continuous, noninterrupted rhythmic flow despite changes in rhythmic structure.

[37] Dudley, "Judging by the Beat," 270.
[38] Ibid.

Ex. 1: Candombe percussionists from the Quilombo do Mato do Tição, or Matição, play an interlocking rhythmic pattern during the 2014 abolition festival hosted by the groups Moçambique and Congo of May 13 of Our Lady of the Rosary from Concórdia, Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Transcription by author and Yuan-Chen Li.

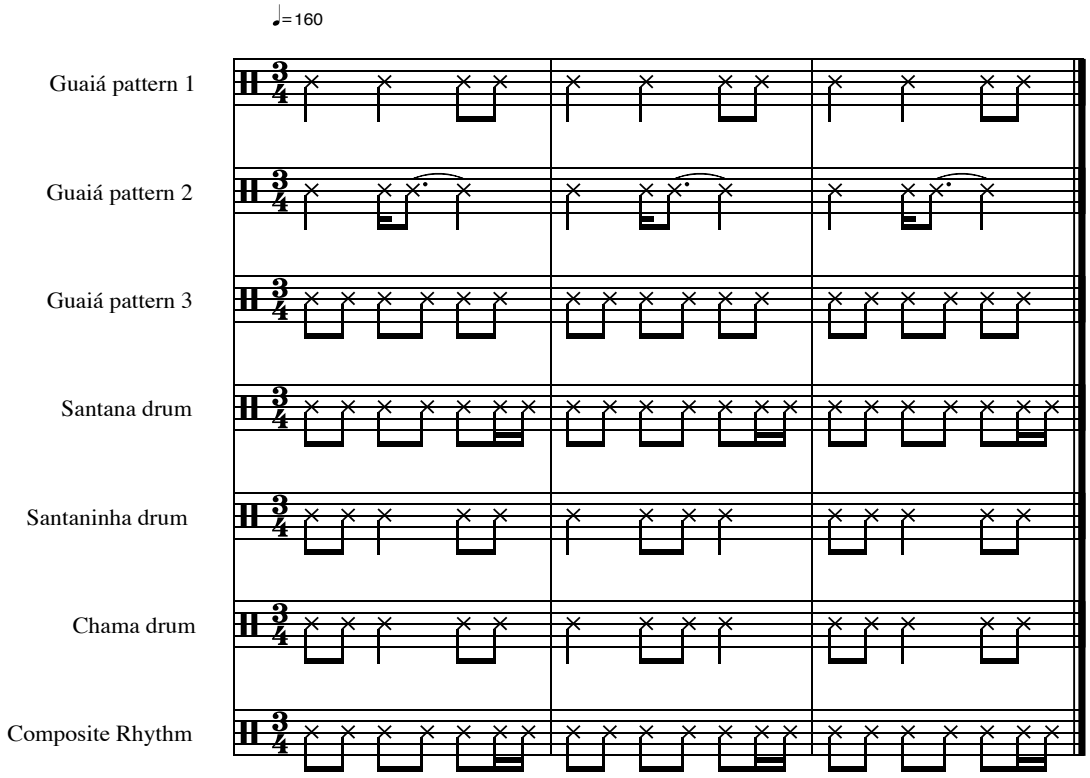



Fig. 3: Candombe musicians from the quilombola community Quilombo do Mato do Tição, or Matição, animate a ceremony on May 13, 2014, that celebrates the abolition of slavery. Photo by author.

The fact that temporal shifts allow for multiple points of entry into the rhythmic cycle reinforces the notion that Congado, at its core, is composed of variations performed in a larger framework of unity and cyclical continuity.

The ways in which the rhythmic parts of the Candombe song interact provide a concrete example of how sound features often encapsulate the fundamental values that Congadeiros cultivate. Despite social identities being numerous and context-contingent, myth and music share similar kinds of social imprinting. Both modalities address Congadeiros' cultivation of certain topoi, such as black pride, unity, and providence. The conviction that Our Lady of the Rosary saved their ancestors from suffering due to their beautiful singing and humility unifies Congado groups across time and space.

The same unity expressed in myth inheres in music too. When the individual rhythms become imbricated into one woof, their resultant parts become inseparable. Indeed, the centripetal forces that gather the sonic fragments from each percussion instrument and blend them together in rhythmic convergence, challenge how and what the listener perceives. The patterns of musical indivisibility, moreover, can be interpreted as a sign of the indivisibility of the musicians who create it. Strikingly, the unity of sound that musicians create is also both a reflection and activation of the solidarity that they express in myth.[39] Invariably, music and myth may be the most evident examples of Congado as racial pride, mobility, and dignity in discourse and sound. Hence, above all, Congado aurality and orality leave no doubt as to the idea that believers aspire to enact: the revelation of racial equality.

### Musical Harmony as Social Harmony

If polyrhythmic drumming is the work of Congadeiros who attempt to enact social harmony through musical imbrication, it is not practitioners' only way to gain purchase on the politics of expressive culture. Antiphonal homophonic singing also distinguishes itself as a means for Congadeiros to express their perspectives on collectivity, providence, and race. During the 2014 festival of Our Lady of the Rosary in the Black Community of the Arturos, members carried out the coronation of the festive kings and queens (*coroação dos reis festeiros*). Each year Congadeiros choose a festive queen and king to preside over the festival and to provide several meals during the musico-religious ceremonies. The coronation ritual simultaneously closes the festival and opens the next one for the following year.

On that night, as Congadeiros transferred the crowns from one festive couple to the next, song of sweet harmony filled the chapel and billowed out into the darkness (see Fig. 4). José Bonifácio da Luz led the Congo and Moçambique groups in song. He intoned and they responded:

[39] Thomas Turino, *Music in the Andes: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

| | |
|---|---|
| Ajoelhai, Senhor,<br>Ajoelhai, Senhor adiante de Deus e Nossa Senhora<br>Ajoelhai, Senhor. | Kneel, sir,<br>Kneel, sir, before God and Our Lady of the Rosary,<br>Kneel, sir. |
| (Antiphon) | (Antiphon) |
| Ajoelhou Senhor<br>Ajoelhou Senhor adiante de Deus e Nossa Senhora,<br>Ajoelhai Senhor. | The sir kneeled,<br>The sir kneeled before God and Our Lady,<br>The sir kneeled. |

Together they sang the phrase again, eroding any sense of strict metric time. Embedded in the lyrics were directions for action; through song, they instructed the crowned festive king and queen to kneel before them in the chapel so that their crowns might be delivered to the next royal couple. The following transcription captures a moment in the antiphonal exchange between José Bonifácio da Luz and the chorus (see Ex. 2). It outlines how music and ritual action narrate and activate the worldly and otherworldly responsibilities of participants. Coronations function, moreover, not only as places to enact religious duty, but also as spaces to confirm fundamental beliefs about who the participants are as a community.

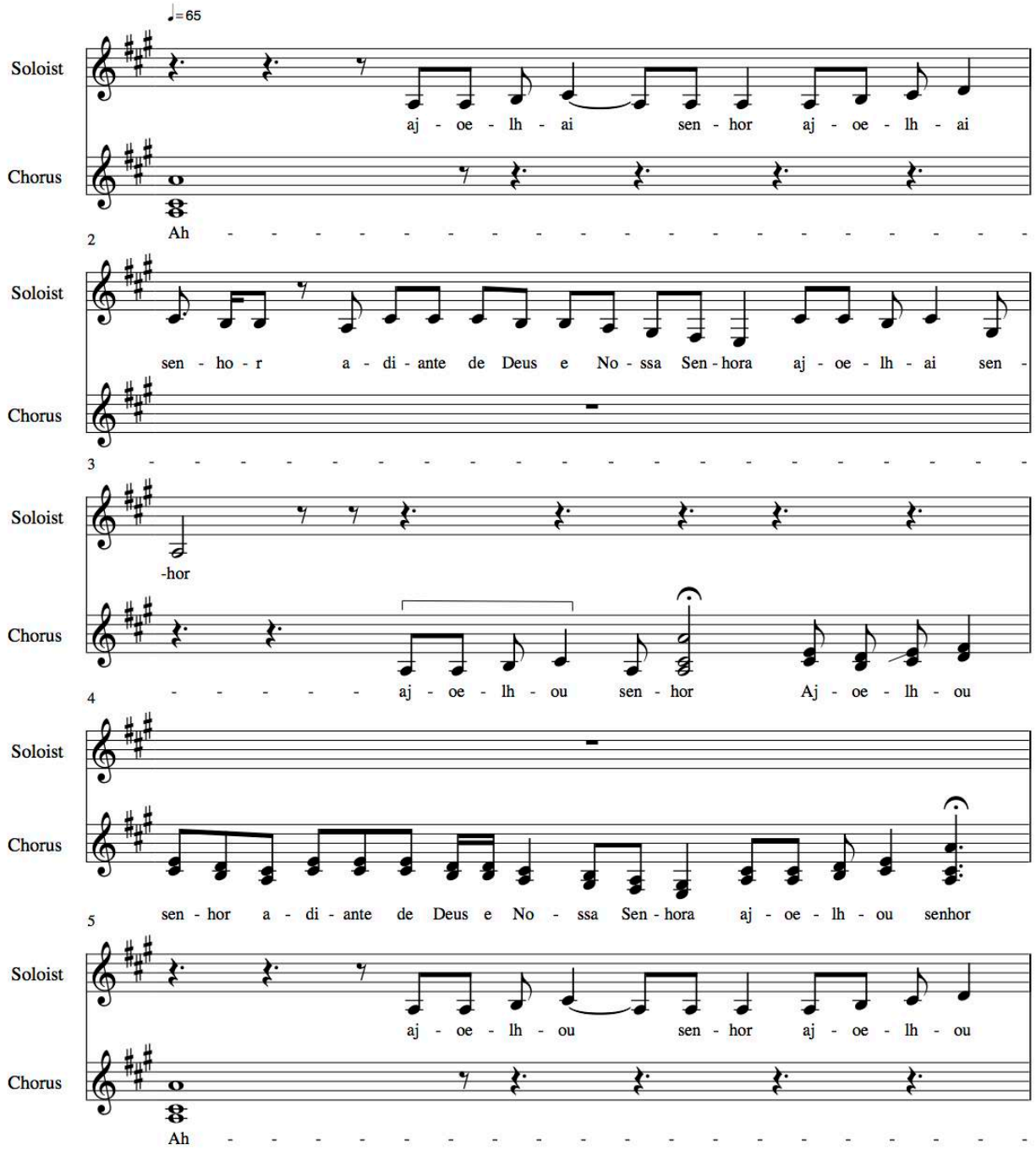
The Congo and Moçambique groups repeated this musical formula of antiphonal homophony for 15 minutes, only changing the lyrics periodically to reflect the shifts in ritual action as they crowned the festive queen and king. In fact, the call-and-response songs narrated and mobilized the action. For example, each time the groups used song to call the festive queen and king to perform an action—kneeling, delivering themselves, and receiving sacred objects—they followed this by singing about its completion. In another moment, the soloist sang and the chorus echoed:

| | |
|---|---|
| Entreguai, Senhor,<br>Entreguai, Senhor adiante de Deus e Nossa Senhora,<br>Entreguai, Senhor. | Deliver yourself, sir<br>Deliver yourself, sir, before God and Our Lady<br>Deliver yourself. |
| (Antiphon) | (Antiphon) |
| Entreguai, Senhor,<br>Entreguai, Senhor adiante de Deus e Nossa Senhora<br>Entreguai, Senhor. | Deliver yourself, sir,<br>Deliver yourself, sir, before God and Our Lady,<br>Deliver yourself. |

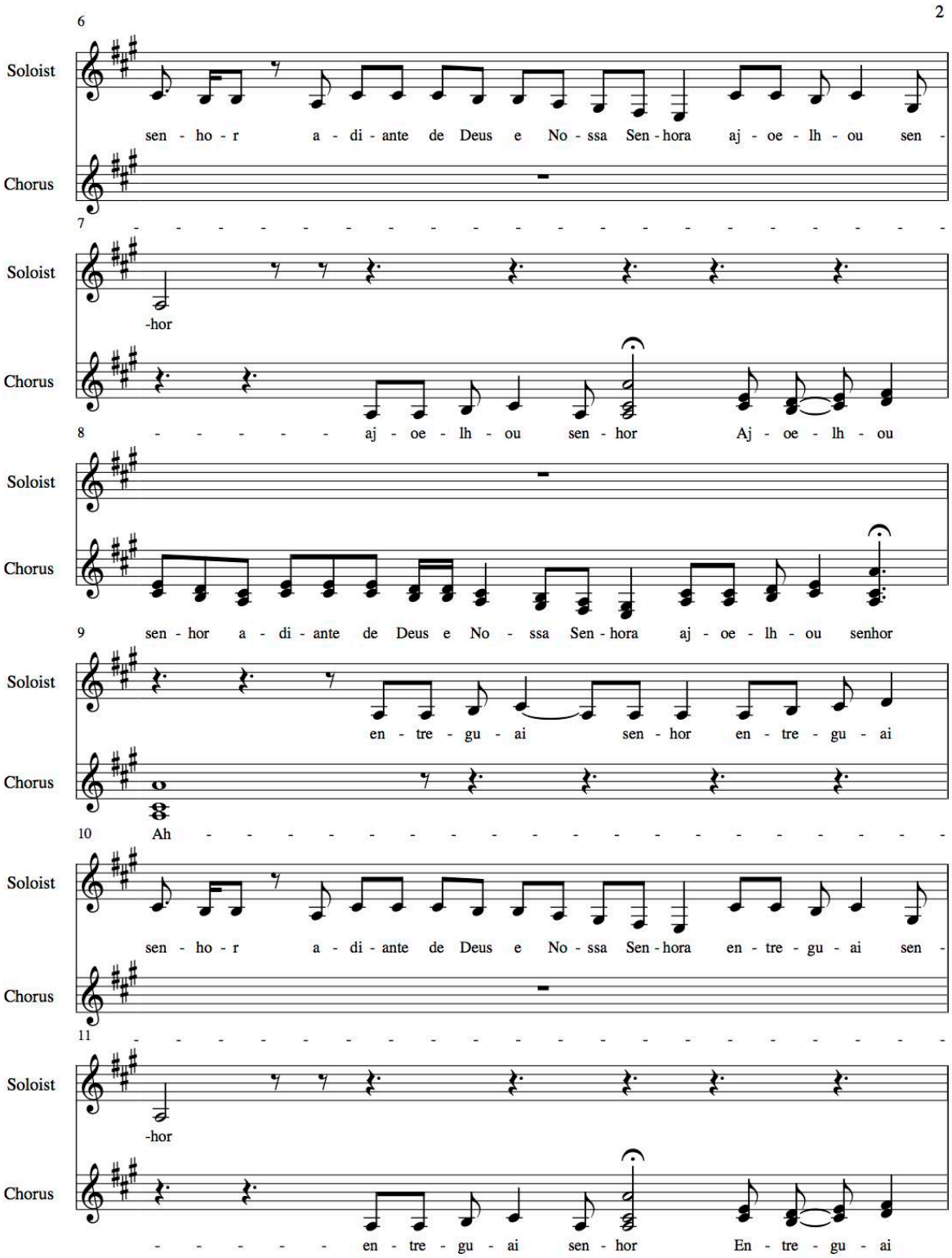
Fig. 4: Coronation of the festive kings and queens in the Black Community of the Arturos during the Festival of Our Lady of the Rosary, 2014. Photo by author.

Congadeiros used musical harmony to bear witness to as well as to operationalize ritual action, which ultimately prompted social harmony. Indeed, to comprehend this ritual situation, we need to focus on the indivisibility between social harmony and musical harmony. It is this sense of harmony at once musical and social that makes possible the transference of crowns from one royal couple to another. And equally important, the performative moment of the coronation becomes a metonym for the Congado community writ large. This is because the receiving and giving of the crown in coronations carries a unique social, political, and religious valence, one that points to a habitus grounded in reciprocity.

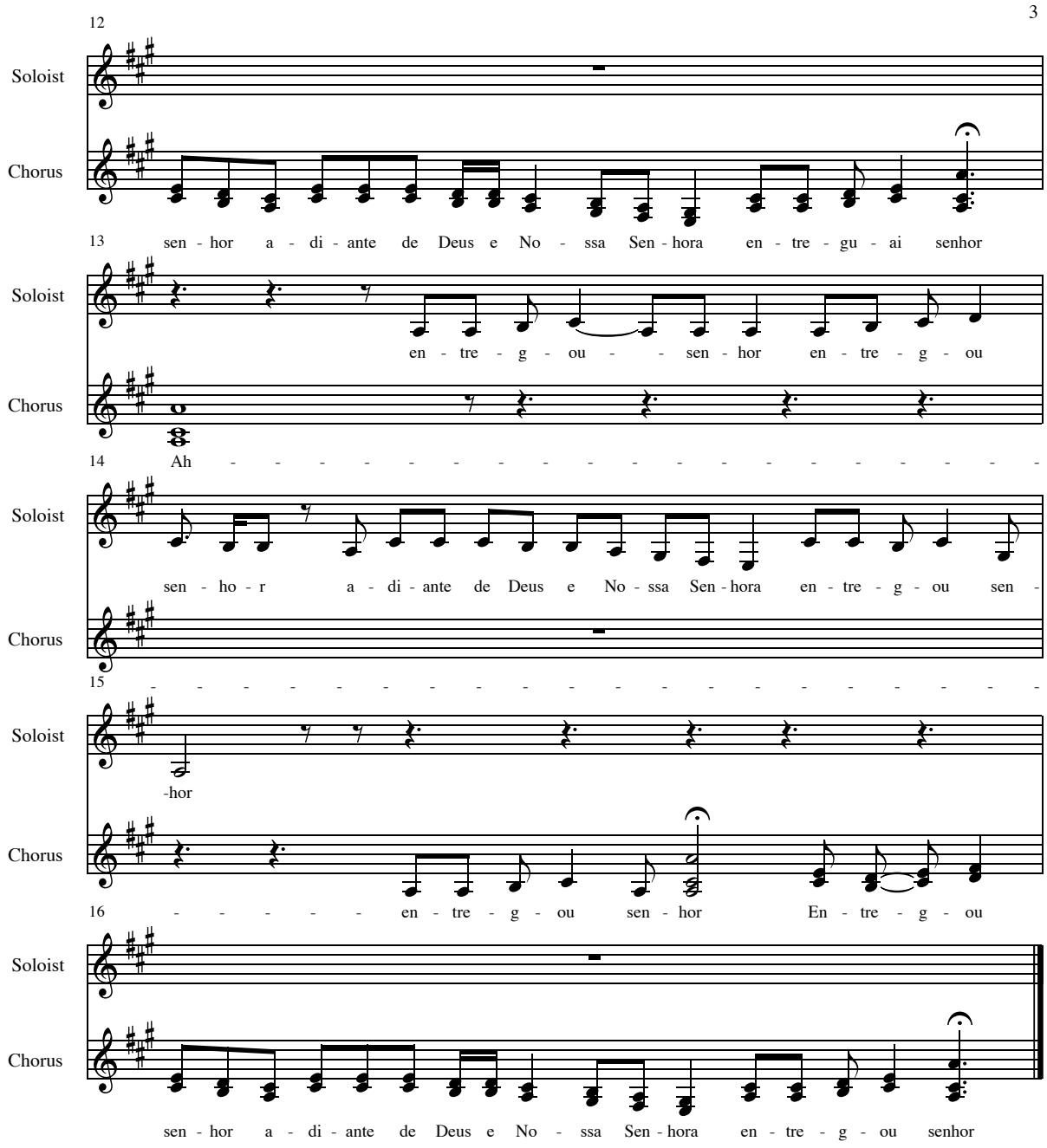
Ex. 2: Musical transcription of the coronation ritual during the Festival of Our Lady of the Rosary in the Black Community of the Arturos, Contagem, Minas Gerais, 2014. Transcription by author and Yuan-Chen Li.



Ex. 2 (continued)

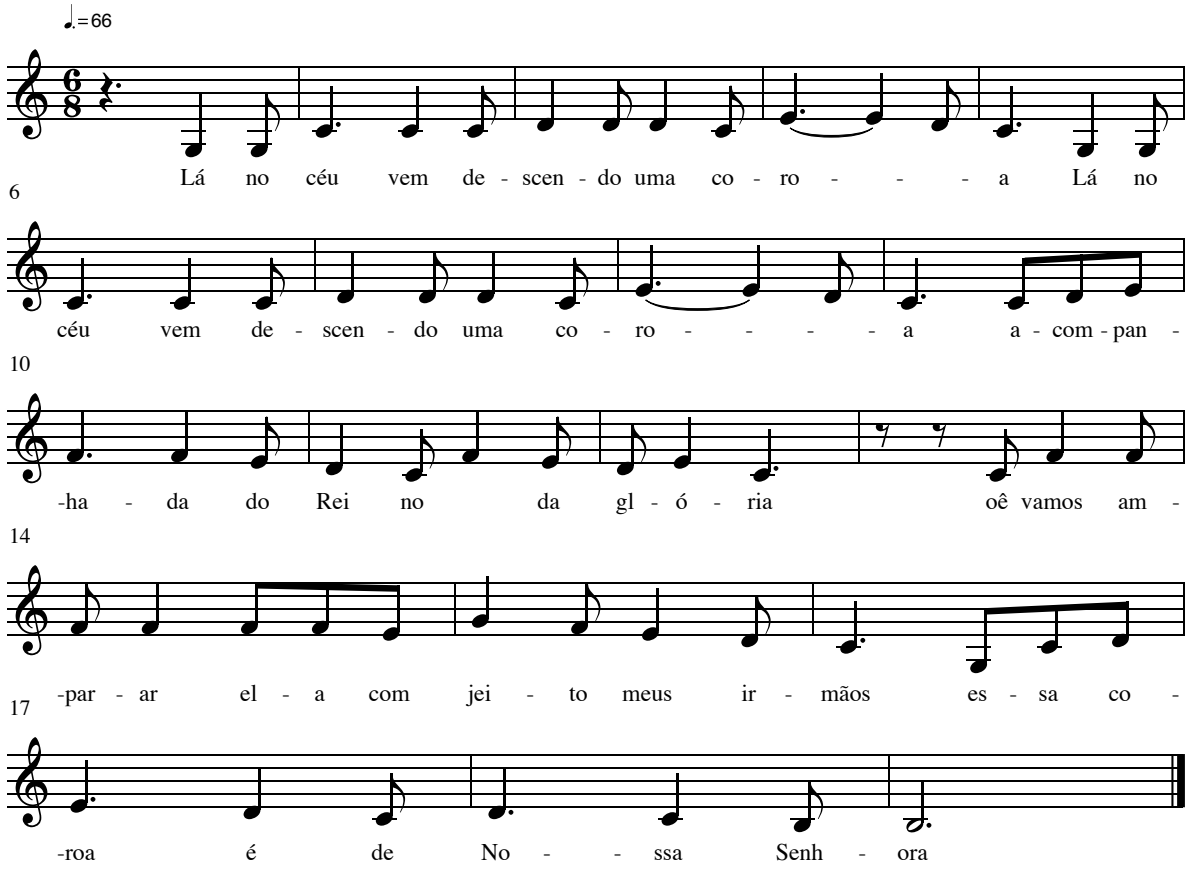

2
6
Soloist
sen - ho - r a - di - ante de Deus e No - ssa Sen - hora aj - oe - lh - ou sen -
Chorus
7
Soloist
-hor
Chorus
8 - - - - - aj - oe - lh - ou sen - hor Aj - oe - lh - ou
Soloist
Chorus
9 sen - hor a - di - ante de Deus e No - ssa Sen - hora aj - oe - lh - ou senhor
Soloist
en - tre - gu - ai sen - hor en - tre - gu - ai
Chorus
10 Ah - - - - -

Ex. 2 (continued)




After singing this passage for 15 minutes, changing its lyrics as they sang, the group progressed to another musical area (see Ex. 3).

Ex. 3: This transcription represents the second musical area to which the Arturos group transitioned. Transcription by author and Yuan-Chen Li.




They sang:

| | |
|---|---|
| Lá no céu vem | There in the sky |
| descendo uma coroa, | descends a crown, |
| Lá no céu vem descendo uma | There in the sky descends a |
| coroa acompanhada do | crown accompanied by the |
| Reino da glória. | Kingdom of glory. |
| Oê, vamos amparar ela com jeito | Oê, let us help it with care, |
| meus irmãos, | my brothers and sisters, |
| Essa coroa é de Nossa Senhora. | This crown is of Our Lady. |

As I stood there in the chapel, it seemed to me that the music of the coronation ceremony brought acoustical form to their experiences of immanence. Indeed, the songs, coincident with crowning the king and queen, helped to mobilize the recreation of a divine royal kingdom on earth—one grounded in their own laws, hierarchies, and structures. Thus, in the end, the voices creating musical harmony became a kind of socializing force that instantiated dignity in the here and now.

The unity that worshipers express so vividly in song mobilizes the conditions of possibility necessary for the community's continuity. Music and myth do not axiomatically generate a unified identity among Congadeiros as much as they unify believers in their quest to be heard and seen to survive. From colonial Brazil to the present day, Congadeiros have given sonic expression to social feelings of collectivity because it is through the maintenance of their community's integrity that they are able to withstand the vicissitudes of time. Musical harmony, then, is not only the roaring engine of social harmony but also of survival.

As Congadeiros confront a host of impoverishing conditions and the social injustice of racism in Brazilian society, they turn to expressive culture for empowerment. Congadeiros invest in myth because stories of their fons et origo—the source and origin of their community—represent more than mere explanations of ritual genesis. Congadeiros enact ideas of black pride, autonomy, and grace within myth to provide the affective force necessary to spur on justice outside of myth. What is more, Congadeiros' aspirations of racial equality and dignity materialize in the sonic contours of their antiphonal homophony and drumming. Thus, in forming a dialectic of mutual indication, music and myth engender striking ways of understanding the multidimensionality of orality and aurality that is Congado. In fact, as palimpsests upon which to record their ultimate concerns, myth and music embody the animus of racial pride and self-determination.

I have advocated a focus on the reflexive relationship between the politics of justice and the expressive modalities of music and myth because their imbrication sheds light on the ways in which a community narrates its history and builds its present and future. Indeed, the mystery, grace, and providence that pervade the porous membranes of music and myth concretize a sense of larger purpose in life for Congadeiros. If we acknowledge that what dwells in music and myth is an underlying narrative that not only remits common human concerns but also embodies Congadeiros' vision of the world, then it becomes evident that practitioners' engagement in performative action is an attempt to turn their aspirations into public action. Thus, the sacred myths and songs of Congadeiros not only become meditations on what it means to be heard in the world, they also become meditations on what it means to embody an acoustics of justice within the lived-in world, while also transcending it.